
THE GREAT PRIZE CONTEST
 By H. M. Egbert

There might have been 20 young women in Peterson's Monument. Peter's Monument was a typical mining town and contained half a dozen millionaires, 500 prospectors and a smattering of tramps, storekeepers and professional men. There was Ransom, the heart-breaker, and little Klaxon, who sold mining tools, and the regular assortment of human characters that one would expect to find in just such a place.

Nobody knew why the engagement between Ransom and Dorothy Bennett, the president's stenographer, had been broken off, but it was surmised that Dorothy had not exercised her privilege from volition. Ransom was blamed more than he would have been in an eastern town—but just about then something happened which entirely changed the current of our thoughts.

The Western Film Co. came through and dropped off Edna Lane, their leading lady. She had decided to take up ranching and had fixed on Peterson's Monument, which had some fine agricultural land in the vicinity. My own estimate of Miss Lane was that she had suffered the usual disillusionment about life that comes to such women at 28 or 29. Anyway, the film company decided to give her a grand send-off.

"Miss Lane will positively marry the most popular man in Peterson's Monument, Red Gulch or Burntover," announced the general manager.

Red Gulch and Burntover, which aggregated a good deal of money between them, came to look over the proposition. Miss Lane came up to the scratch smiling. Yes, she didn't care whom she married, she said, as long as he could take care of the farm, and she wouldn't go back on her word, not even if the most popular man happened to be little Harry

Klaxon, with one shoulder higher than the other.

Red Gulch and Burntover developed a strong mutual rivalry and each town was resolved to have the honor of one if its citizens marrying Miss Lane. However, Peterson's Monument had its own ideas on the subject. At 25 cents a vote it calculated that, if Pres. Harding helped out, it could vote Ransom into the job.

Pres. Harding, it may be said, was the employer of Miss Dorothy Ben-



nett, who had turned down Ransom—or else had been turned down by him. Ransom, pursuing his heartless way, had soon forgotten, but I knew Miss Dorothy had not.

The mayor went to Ransom. "Peterson's Monument has done well by you," he said, "and Peterson's Monument expects you to do well by it and not let Red Gulch or Burntover steal Miss Lane away from us. You've got to be the handsomest and most popular man in town. It ain't hard for